

Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

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PASS AGRICULTURE FOR FAS/OGSM, ERS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PO

SUBJ: REDUCED GRAIN AREA REPORTED, 1977 PRODUCTION
THREATENED

1. QUALIFIED OBSERVERS ARE SAYING WINTER GRAIN PLANTINGS (WHEAT, BARLEY, OATS, RYE) IN ALENTEJO PROVINCES WERE FIRST RETARDED AND THEN SEVERELY REDUCED BY EXCESSIVE RAINFALL IN LATE 1976. CONSEQUENTLY, PROSPECTS FOR 1977 PRODUCTION OF CEREALS APPEAR AT THIS EARLY JUNCTURE TO BE GLOOMY INDEED.

2. AREA FARMERS AND GOP REPRESENTATIVES ESTIMATE REDUCTIONS IN PLANTED AREA OF UP TO 40 AND EVEN 50 PERCENT AS COMPARED WITH 1975-76 SEASON. AGATT INFORMED THAT LOWLANDS WERE SO WATERLOGGED IN PARTS OF ALENTEJO THAT TRACTORS COULD NOT ENTER FOR PLANTING. ON HIGHER GROUND, WEEDS SPROUTED IN PLOWED FIELDS BEFORE WHEAT AND OTHER GRAINS COULD BE SOWN. SEED, MOREOVER, IS REPORTED TO BE SCARCE BECAUSE OF POOR '76 CROP AND SCANTY DELIVERIES BY COLLECTIVE FARMING UNITS. LISBON DAILY, O DIA, SAID JAN. 12 THAT NATIONAL CEREALS INSTITUTE TECHNICIANS HAVE PREDICTED PORTUGAL WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PRODUCE MORE THAN 180,000 TO 300,000 TONS OF WHEAT AS COMPARED WITH 680,000 MT IN 1976.

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3. EVEN THOUGH CRIES OF ALARM ARE HABITUAL THIS EARLY IN CROP SEASON, THE PREVALENCE OF PESSIMISTIC REPORTS INDICATES THAT ALL CANNOT BE WELL IN PRINCIPAL GRAIN REGION. FIRST OFFICIAL PLANTING ESTIMATES WILL NOT BE COLLATED AND PUBLISHED UNTIL MID-FEBRUARY, BUT SPOKESMAN FOR NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS INFORMS US THAT

ABOVE REPORTS PROBABLY ARE NOT TOO FAR FROM THE TRUTH.

4. AGATT PLANS TO VISIT AREA IN EARLY FEBRUARY.
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